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AUTHOR	McNeill, Patrick
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ABSTRACT

This teaching guide is aimed at British teachers, especially those at the entry level, who are delivering and assessing key skill programs to help students become independent learners. The document has seven sections dealing with these topics of effective learning and performance: (1) a theoretical overview of the skill itself including its application to the curriculum and student learning styles; (2) arrangement of independent learning units across four grade levels; (3) initial student assessment; (4) how students can set targets and make plans; (5) how students can follow a plan and find support; (6) how students can review their progress and learn from experience; and (7) guidelines for student portfolio preparation. Throughout the guide there are teaching tips, classroom activities, and sample units. There are ten figures, a glossary of terms, and a list of 18 resources. (AJ)

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Key Skills
SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Teaching and learning

Improving Own Learning and Performance

CE 084 456

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Feedback should be sent to:
Information Services
Learning and Skills Development Agency
Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS.
Tel 020 7297 9144
Fax 020 7297 9242
kssp@LSDA.org.uk

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Some publications from the Key Skills Support Programme

Adding value: integrating the wider key skills

Good practice guides

- *Developing and managing portfolios*
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- *Preparing for external assessment*
- *Writing assignments*

How are you managing? Key skills in colleges

How are you managing? Key skills in schools

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Key skills: a handbook for coordinators

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Key skills in context

Key skills resource manual

Speaking and listening: finding the level (video and pack)

Talking of number: A-level and vocational contexts (video and pack)

Teaching and learning

- *Application of Number*
- *Communication*
- *Information Technology*

For the full range of KSSP publications and online resources please visit the website at www.keyskillssupport.net

Preface

What is the purpose of this publication?

This *Teaching and learning* guide is designed to provide practical advice and support for teachers who are delivering and assessing the key skill Improving Own Learning and Performance at Levels 1–3 in schools and colleges. It can be used as an introduction to Improving Own Learning and Performance, as a source of teaching ideas, for reference, as a handbook, or just for reassurance. It is based on the experience of centres that have been delivering Improving Own Learning and Performance in the last few years, and particularly since September 2000.

Who is it for?

It is written for tutors, teachers and lecturers in schools and colleges who are supporting students as they aim to achieve Improving Own Learning and Performance in any area of the curriculum. It is written primarily for tutors who are relatively new to the key skill, though more experienced practitioners will also find it helpful.

This guide does not include:

- detailed advice and guidance on interpreting the key skills specifications for the purpose of assessing students' work. Assessment is the responsibility of the awarding bodies, which provide specialised training. For contact details, please see Appendix 2.
- advice on how to write assignments that develop and/or provide evidence for key skills. This is provided in *Good practice guide: writing assignments*, available from the Key Skills Support Programme. (For contact details, please see back cover.)

The full title of 'Improving Own Learning and Performance' is often abbreviated to 'IOLP'. This abbreviation will be used in this publication.

The term 'tutor' is used in this publication to refer to teachers, lecturers, trainers, form tutors and personal tutors. The term 'student' is used to refer to pupils, students, learners and trainees.

SECTION 1

What is Improving Own Learning and Performance?

IOLP is the underpinning key skill that promotes effective performance in education, training and employment. It focuses on students' ability to:

- plan
- set targets
- monitor their own progress
- reflect on their own learning and performance
- learn from experience
- become independent learners.

IOLP is above all a process of continuous development and improvement. It provides students with a structured approach to learning and self-management and is relevant to every context – from GCSE and GNVQ through advanced-level study to higher education, work-based learning and employment.

Independent learners

The aim of IOLP is to help students to become independent learners who know what they want to achieve and can work towards their targets. The student learns to look on the tutor as a resource to support them in the learning they have planned. The tutor's role is to create a climate in which students contribute to and negotiate their own learning plans and are able to review and discuss their progress.

IOLP is above all a process of continuous development and improvement.

To become independent, students need to:	The tutor's role is to:
know what they want to achieve	■ help students to reflect on and clarify their goals and ambitions
know where their strengths lie	■ get to know students as individuals ■ carry out initial and ongoing assessment of their performance ■ give them regular and detailed feedback about their performance (formative assessment/assessment for learning)
know where they need to develop their skills	■ help students to identify their strengths and weaknesses and give feedback or advice on areas in need of development
be able to set themselves realistic goals and SMART targets (see page 25)	■ help students to recognise what is possible ■ help them to articulate and shape realistic goals and targets
know how they learn best	■ explain that there are different ways of learning ■ encourage students to try different ways of learning and to identify their preferred style/s ■ demonstrate different teaching styles
work towards targets and be able to ask for help when they need it	■ tell students what help is available and show them how to use available resources effectively ■ encourage students to see opportunities to learn and improve rather than mistakes and difficulties
learn from experience.	■ help students to reflect on what has been going well and how this self-understanding can be used in the future.

Students who are well organised, know what they want to do, ask for advice when they need it and get things done on time are the ones who stay calm and do well. They are not always the ones who seem most clever, so what's their secret? They make plans, set targets, organise themselves and learn from experience.

IOLP and higher education

Higher education is becoming a mass opportunity rather than a privilege for the select few. As student numbers increase, universities are emphasising the value of the skills that are central to IOLP. They stress that students need to:

- be self-motivated
- organise their own time
- try out and use different methods of learning and working
- set themselves targets and meet deadlines
- learn from experience to improve performance.

Many higher education institutions (HEIs) are developing entry profiles for their courses which identify the qualifications and skills that are welcomed in applicants. These often mention the wider key skills – particularly IOLP – and emphasise that evidence of their achievement should be mentioned in the personal statement. (See the UCAS website: www.ucas.com)

The message we are getting from the universities is that they welcome evidence that applicants have developed their key skills, especially study skills (eg Improving Own Learning and Performance), teamwork (eg Working with Others), Communication and Information Technology. These skills can be developed in taught programmes and in enrichment activities and should always be emphasised in the personal statement on the UCAS form. Students need these skills while at university.

Steve Porter, Senior Curriculum and Development Officer, UCAS

One of the most important skills to be a success at university is being able to study; that is using study skills and learning skills to develop one's own learning profile under one's own steam.

Dr John Ash, Director of Admissions, University of Birmingham

IOLP, work-based learning and employment

Employers want trainees and staff who:

- **are independent and self-motivated**
- **can set themselves targets and plan how they will achieve them in a given timescale**
- **can evaluate and learn from their own performance**
- **can learn new skills and knowledge and adapt to new situations.**

These are the skills that are developed by IOLP.

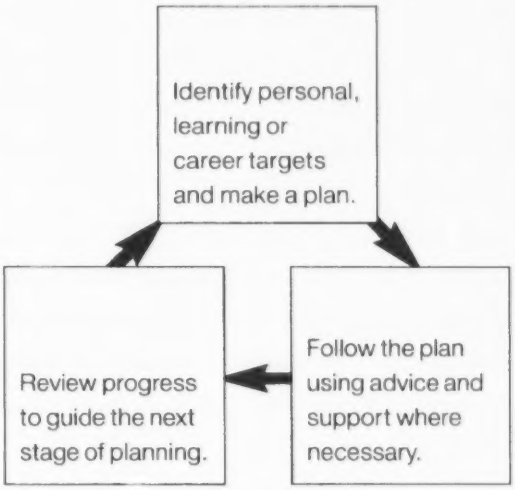
The key skills standards have been designed to support candidates' learning and development programmes. As a means of demonstrating how this can be achieved, all candidates should be encouraged to include the key skill of Improving Own Learning and Performance within their programme of study.

QCA (December 2001). *The review of key skills: the final report*. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

The IOLP process

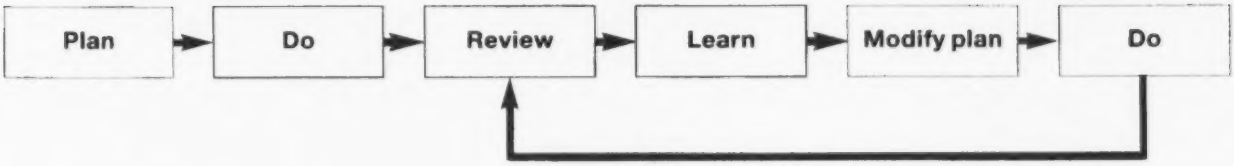
The core of the IOLP units is the familiar cyclical process illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1. The IOLP cycle


Identify personal, learning or career targets and make a plan.
Follow the plan using advice and support where necessary.
Review progress to guide the next stage of planning.

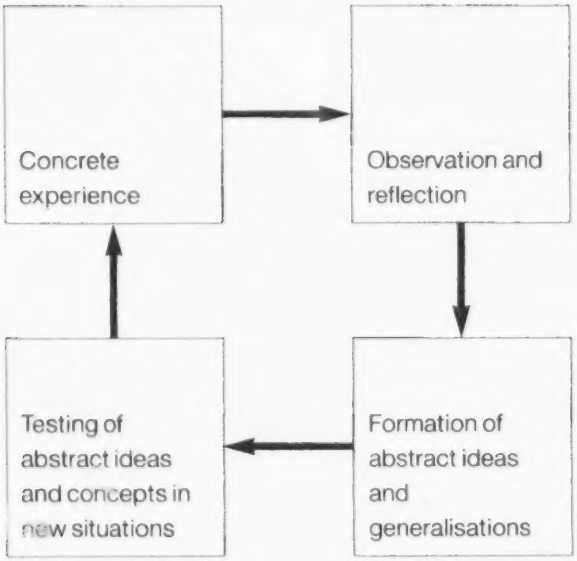
This cyclical process is the same at every level of IOLP. The cycle is ongoing, with students reflecting on their performance throughout the process and using this insight to guide the next stage. The process thus becomes similar to that shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. The plan–do–review cycle



The plan–do–review cycle is based on David Kolb's model of the learning process (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Kolb's model of the learning process


Concrete experience
Observation and reflection
Testing of abstract ideas and concepts in new situations
Formation of abstract ideas and generalisations

Improving Own Learning and Performance is about helping you:

- ***understand how you learn***
- ***think about how you can improve your own learning and performance***
- ***consider how you might generalise the principles and processes for future learning.***

In working on this key skill, as with other key skills, you will be learning two different things at once. You will be using skills to help you improve your learning and performance as well as using the processes of the three-stage framework to help you learn how to learn more generally.

Open University (2002). *Improving Own Learning and Performance*. At www.open.ac.uk/studentweb/keyskills/improve.html

Process skills and interpersonal skills

IOLP calls for two different types of skills:

- **process skills**, such as target-setting, planning, learning, recording and reviewing
- **interpersonal skills**, such as communicating needs, asking for help and feedback, supporting others and negotiating support for oneself.

It also draws on and develops personal qualities such as:

- confidence
- self-motivation
- persistence
- openness to feedback
- willingness to learn from experience.

The process skills are the main focus of portfolio assessment but these cannot be fully developed without the interpersonal skills and personal qualities.

Process skills and interpersonal skills are underpinned by knowledge – how to set targets, how to plan, how to seek help and how to receive and use feedback. This know-how is the focus of this publication.

They* [students] *don't just acquire these skills through osmosis; you have to make sure they are aware of what they are doing and why some things go well and others go wrong.

Sixth form tutor

Learning styles

The IOLP units and QCA's *Guidance on the wider key skills* (QCA/01/735) place great emphasis on the importance of students identifying their own preferred ways of learning.

A learning style is the approach an individual takes to learning new skills and knowledge. For example, some people learn best when working with others and taking part in discussions and group projects, while other people learn best by working alone, reading and thinking things through by themselves. No one learning style is better than another; it is simply that people learn in different ways. Many people vary their learning style according to what they are learning. The best learning style is the one that works for an individual in a particular situation.

In recent years, more emphasis has been placed on the idea that it is a tutor's responsibility to enable each student to learn in the way that suits them best by:

- recognising that each student has a preferred learning style
- teaching in a variety of ways so that each student has the opportunity to learn according to their preferred learning style.

This will enable all students to learn more easily and to enjoy their learning.

In the context of IOLP, students need to be made aware that there are different learning styles and that they may prefer some styles to others. Many students experience failure because they use inappropriate learning strategies from force of habit. They should be encouraged to experiment with different styles and will need lots of support and reinforcement if they need to change such habits: unlearning can be more difficult than learning.

Models of learning styles

There are many models of learning styles. However, the model on which the IOLP units are based draws on a three-fold classification:

- visual learners – who learn by seeing and reading
- auditory learners – who learn by hearing and listening
- tactile/kinaesthetic learners – who learn by actions and doing.

Visual learners

Visual learners relate most effectively to written information, notes, diagrams and pictures. They will be unhappy with a presentation where they cannot take detailed notes. To an extent, information does not exist for a visual learner unless they have seen it written down. This is why some visual learners will take notes even when they have printed course notes on the desk in front of them. Visual learners will tend to be most effective in written communication, symbol manipulation etc.

Auditory learners

Auditory learners relate most effectively to the spoken word. They will tend to listen to a lecture, and then make notes afterwards, or rely on printed notes. Information written down may have little meaning until it has been heard. Therefore, it may help auditory learners to read written information out loud. Auditory learners may be sophisticated speakers, and may be most effective in subjects like law or politics.

Tactile/kinaesthetic learners

Kinaesthetic learners learn most effectively through touch, movement and space. They learn skills by imitation and practice. Kinaesthetic learners may sometimes appear slow, because information is not presented in a style that suits their learning methods.

Note: Several versions of this classification exist and can be found on the internet using a search term such as 'learning styles'.

Honey and Mumford have developed another widely used model of types of learner, which includes:

- **activists**
- **reflectors**
- **theorists**
- **pragmatists.**

A more detailed account of this model, together with material for a training session, can be found in item 3.11 of the *Key skills resource manual*, published by the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP).

It is important to remember that these are models. No one individual fits entirely into one of the categories. Most people find that a mix of styles, adapted to different contexts, is most effective.

Learning styles in the IOLP units

Levels 1 and 2	learning styles (eg using pictures, words, listening, watching or doing something)
Level 3	learning styles (eg visual, verbal, auditory, physical)

It is not important for IOLP purposes that students should be familiar with the psychological classifications and terminology of learning styles. What is important is that:

- they know that learning styles vary
- they may not be using the style that best suits them
- you encourage them to experiment with other styles.

Many questionnaires and tests for diagnosing learning styles can be found on the internet. They are of variable quality but a good starting point is www.learningstyles.com – click on 'Learning style'.

Activity 1

As a simple illustration, to get students to think about their learning style, ask a group to remember a phone number with which they are familiar. Then ask:

- who 'sees', in their mind's eye, how the numbers look on the phone's keypad? (Visual)
- who 'sees' the number on a piece of paper, typed or hand-written? (Visual)
- who 'hears' the number in the way that someone might recite it to you? (Auditory)
- who 'lets their fingers do the walking', ie thinks of their fingers moving on the keypad? (Tactile)

Having identified the variety of learning styles in the group, ask the students to think of other things they have learned and how they remember them.

Activity 2

Introducing students to the idea that there are different ways of learning, and that these are suited to different people and different tasks, can be a dry business if it is tutor-centred. Instead, try dividing students into pairs and asking one member of each pair to teach the other how to use the library, search the internet, drive a car or juggle. As they do so, point out how they use words or gestures, or maybe a diagram or even say 'I can't do this without actually demonstrating the task'.

Links with other key skills

All three of the wider key skills are based on the plan–do–review cycle illustrated on page 5. For example, at Level 2, the units require the student to:

	Working with Others	**Improving Own Learning and Performance**	**Problem Solving**
	Provide at least two examples to meet WO2.1, WO2.2 and WO2.3	*Provide at least two examples to meet LP2.1, LP2.2 and LP2.3*	*Provide at least two examples to meet PS2.1, PS2.2 and PS2.3*
Plan	2.1 Plan ... identifying objectives ... clarifying responsibilities	2.1 Help set ... targets and plan...	2.1 Identify a problem and come up with two options...
Do	2.2 Work ... towards achieving identified objectives...	2.2 ...take responsibility ... using your plan ... meet targets...	2.2 Plan and try out ... obtaining support ... making changes...
Review	2.3 Exchange information on progress ... agree ways of improving ... to help achieve objectives	2.3 Review progress ... provide evidence of your achievements...	2.3 Check if ... solved, describe results ... explain your approach...

Application of Number and Information Technology (two of the three key skills qualifications) are based on the same cycle. They too place great emphasis on the processes of planning and development, as the following extract from the Level 3 specifications shows.

However, while it is clear that the skills students will develop through IOLP are transferable to the other key skills, experience suggests that it is not easy to achieve more than one of the wider key skills in the same piece of work.

	Application of Number	**Information Technology**
	Plan and carry through at least one substantial and complex activity that includes tasks for N3.1, N3.2 and N3.3	*Plan and carry through at least one substantial activity that includes tasks for IT3.1, IT3.2 and IT3.3*
Plan	3.1 Plan and interpret information...	3.1 Plan and use different sources...
Do	3.2 Carry out multi-stage calculations...	3.2 Explore, develop and exchange information and derive new information...
Review	3.3 Interpret results ... present your findings ... justify your methods	3.3 Present information...

IOLP in the curriculum

The KSSP publication *Adding value: integrating the wider key skills* features a number of case studies of schools and colleges that are delivering the wider key skills across the curriculum. The research on which the publication is based showed that delivery is typically in one of the following contexts:

- main programmes
- tutorials
- enrichment programmes
- work experience.

Some of the skills we aim to develop in an active tutorial programme are:

- ***identifying personal, learning or career targets***
- ***planning how to achieve them***
- ***following the plan, with help if needed***
- ***discussing how the plan worked and what might be done differently next time.***

Year 12 tutor

Years ago, courses and learning programmes were structured to prepare the student for a single exam at the end of the course. Now, with coursework and internal assessment, a student may have as many as 20 deadlines to meet in a year. Students have to learn to plan their work and get organised. IOLP helps to structure this process.

Curriculum Manager, Amersham and Wycombe College

IOLP in main programmes

Many GCSE and AS/A2 programmes, and all GNVQ and vocational A-level (AVCE) programmes, involve students in preparing coursework projects or assignments over a period of time. This kind of learning activity, if it is to be successful, requires the student to follow a sequence for which the structure of IOLP provides the ideal framework.

IOLP and tutorials

Many schools and colleges offer tutorial programmes that include work on study skills, including time management and target-setting. It is a short step from such programmes to achieving IOLP at the appropriate level.

IOLP and enrichment programmes

The phrases 'enrichment programmes' and 'enhanced curriculum' cover a very wide range of activity in schools and colleges – from school plays and concerts, through community service and charity work, to externally accredited programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, ASDAN and Young Enterprise. HEIs and employers value these enrichment activities which all involve the plan–do–review cycle and are, therefore, ideal for delivering IOLP.

Delivering IOLP (and the other wider key skills) through enrichment programmes has several advantages.

- Experienced staff are already responsible for the schemes.
- The schemes already have timetable space and accommodation.
- The schemes are student-centred and, therefore, offer a flexible approach.

But the biggest single advantage is that both students and staff see these programmes as relevant, enjoyable and worthwhile.

IOLP and work experience

Opportunities for students to experience an adult working environment as part of their educational experience are not new. Typically, such experience is provided for a week or two in Year 10 and/or Year 11 but it is by no means limited to this. For example, many students have part-time jobs or undertake voluntary work and gain similar experience.

Schools that have highly developed work experience schemes encourage students to see work experience as a process rather than simply a 1- or 2-week placement. The process involves four phases:

- briefing and planning for the placement
- carrying out the placement
- debriefing and reviewing the experience and what the student has learned
- using the learning back in school.

Students are encouraged to review and evaluate what they do and learn in each phase of the process. They assess and evaluate what they have learned, how they have learned and what they could do better in the future.

The report of a KSSP/ASDAN project in 2002, which involved 20 centres integrating IOLP into ASDAN activities, stresses that it is essential that centres integrate IOLP from the start of a programme, with staff and students fully aware of what is involved.

Centres that viewed the wider key skills as their starting point, as the framework which would underpin whatever were the students' main or enrichment activities, experienced few of the difficulties encountered by centres which perceived the wider key skills as something to add on to other activities.

KSSP/ASDAN (2002). *Wider key skills project report.*

IOLP and Progress File

Progress File is a set of interactive materials designed to help young people from age 13 (and adults) to plan and manage their own learning and develop the skills to:

- reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses
- identify realistic goals and targets
- record their achievement
- review their progress
- recognise their potential.

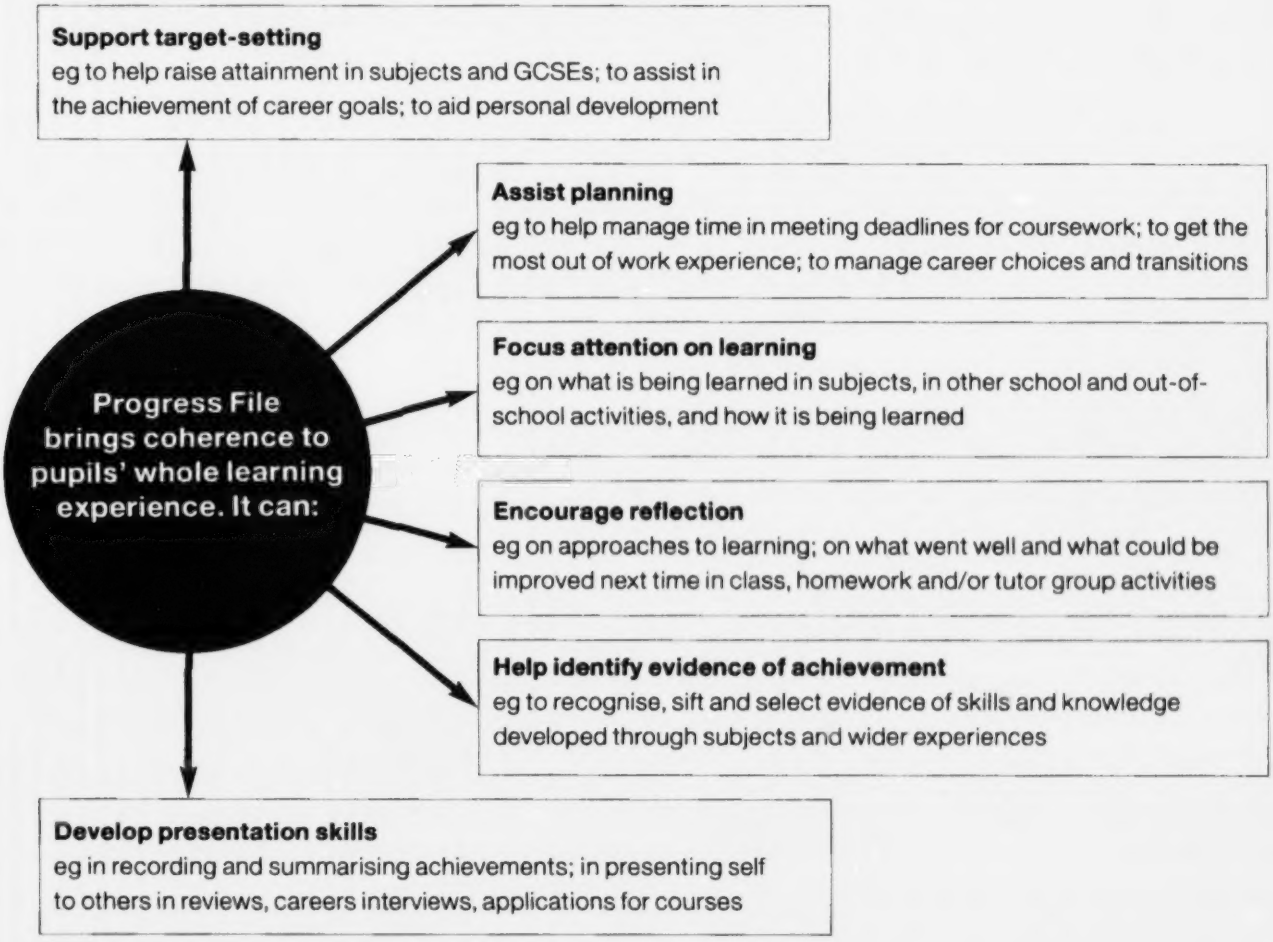
Thus, Progress File helps to develop many aspects of IOLP.

The Progress File materials include many useful suggestions for planning, reviewing, recording etc. The process of using them can generate evidence towards the IOLP portfolio.

See figure 4 on page 14.

KSSP offers free training sessions on how Progress File and IOLP can be developed together, especially at post-16 level (*Widening horizons*), to the advantage of students, schools and colleges. For details, call the Key Skills Helpline on 0870 872 8081.

Figure 4. An extract from Progress File


Support target-setting
eg to help raise attainment in subjects and GCSEs; to assist in the achievement of career goals; to aid personal development
Progress File brings coherence to pupils' whole learning experience. It can:
Assist planning
eg to help manage time in meeting deadlines for coursework; to get the most out of work experience; to manage career choices and transitions
Focus attention on learning
eg on what is being learned in subjects, in other school and out-of-school activities, and how it is being learned
Encourage reflection
eg on approaches to learning; on what went well and what could be improved next time in class, homework and/or tutor group activities
Help identify evidence of achievement
eg to recognise, sift and select evidence of skills and knowledge developed through subjects and wider experiences
Develop presentation skills
eg in recording and summarising achievements; in presenting self to others in reviews, careers interviews, applications for courses

Source: DfES. *Progress File supplement 2 – National Curriculum*. Department for Education and Skills. Details of Progress File can be obtained from www.dfes.gov.uk/progfile

SECTION 2 How the IOLP units are arranged

There is an IOLP unit at each level from 1 to 4, and these levels are equivalent to the levels in the National Qualifications Framework. At Level 5, a single integrated key skill – Personal Skills Development – combines IOLP with the other wider key skills and with key skill Communication. This publication focuses on IOLP Levels 1–3.

As with all the key skills, the IOLP units are presented in three parts and addressed directly to the student.

- Part A tells the student what they need to know – the techniques that underpin successful performance of IOLP.
- Part B sets out what the student must do and the evidence they must include in their portfolio.
- Part C gives the student some examples of the activities they might use to develop and generate evidence for IOLP, together with examples of what might constitute evidence.

Differentiation across the levels

All six key skills have the same framework of progression through the levels of achievement.

Level 1 is underpinned by basic knowledge, techniques and understanding. Students have to show that they can apply their skills to meet straightforward objectives in routine situations where they have support.

Level 2 requires students to extend their use of the basic techniques. They have to take responsibility for some decisions about selecting and applying their skills in the context of largely straightforward tasks.

Level 3 marks a shift from straightforward tasks to more complex activities and over a longer period of time. Students have to demonstrate more explicit thinking and reasoning ability and that they can take personal responsibility for deciding how tasks are organised.

The specifications for IOLP and the wider key skills give a specialised meaning to certain words (eg straightforward, complex, extended period). Appendix 1 is a glossary of this terminology.

What students need to know at Levels 1–3 – Part A

Figure 5 is based on Part A of the IOLP specification and shows the underpinning skills that students need to develop at each level.

Figure 5. Part A of the IOLP specification

Students need to know about	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Targets	Understand targets. Identify clear action points	Help set targets; provide accurate information and identify clear action points	Agree targets
Time management	Work within timescales (a few weeks or less)	Set deadlines and manage own time	Overcome problems to do with extended timescales
Support	Use support	Take some responsibility; identify and use support when needed	Take responsibility; overcome any problems with support
Feedback	Check what is needed to improve performance	Identify what needs to be done to improve performance	Seek and actively use feedback
Learning styles	Use different ways of learning	Select and use different learning styles and methods including preferred methods	Identify different learning styles and methods and use preferred methods
Evidence of performance	Identify targets met and achievements	Identify evidence of achievement	Use relevant sources to identify evidence of achievement
Review	Give an opinion on learning and performance	Review progress and performance	Reflect and exchange views on the quality of performance

What students must do at Levels 1–3 – Part B

Figure 6 is based on Part B of the IOLP specification.

Figure 6. Part B of the IOLP specification

Main task	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Plan (target-setting)	Confirm short-term targets and plan with the person setting them	Help to set short-term targets and plan how these will be met	Agree targets and plan how to meet them over an extended period, using support
Do (carrying out the plan)	Follow the plan, using support given by others	Use the plan and support others to help meet targets	Use your plan, seeking support to help meet targets
Review (reviewing and improving)	Review progress and achievements in meeting targets	Review progress and identify evidence of achievements	Review progress and establish evidence of achievements

At Level 1:

The tutor says:
'This is what I want you to do and by when. This is how I think you might do it.'

The student says:
'I understand that. This is how I will do it.'

At Level 2:

The student says:
'This is what I want to do. Can you help me work out how to do it?'

The tutor says:
'Let's check that your targets are sensible.'
'What about trying this way?'

At Level 3:

The student says:
'This is what I want to do and I think this is how I'm going to do it.'
'I've got a problem; can you help?'

The tutor says:
'Have you remembered the Christmas holiday?'
'Have you tried tackling it in a different way?'

Assessment and certification

Like the other wider key skills, IOLP is assessed through a portfolio of evidence that demonstrates that the candidate has the underpinning knowledge and can apply it. As with all key skills, the evidence must cover the whole of the requirement of Part B of the unit at the relevant level, and the portfolio must be internally verified and externally moderated.

There are no external tests for IOLP, though assessors can use question-and-answer sessions to confirm that candidates understand the processes and techniques they have used in achieving their goals.

The IOLP unit, like the other two wider key skills, is offered and certificated by the key skills awarding bodies.

The process of planning and building a portfolio for the key skills qualifications (Application of Number, Communication and Information Technology) at any level provides an excellent framework for achieving IOLP. In many centres, personal or form tutors mentor students as they build their key skills qualifications portfolio and support them in achieving IOLP.

For information and guidance about generating key skills evidence and building portfolios, see the *Good practice guide: developing and managing portfolios*, available from KSSP.

Evidence

Many of the issues surrounding evidence for IOLP are the same as those for the key skills qualifications and will not be repeated in detail here. The essential points are that evidence must be:

- **purposeful**. The evidence should be generated as part of a task that the student had to carry out in the context of another activity. The activity must have a purpose and relevance of its own. Evidence that has been generated simply for the sake of generating evidence is not purposeful.
- **authentic**. Evidence must have been produced by the student, with no more help than the unit allows.
- **valid**. Evidence must show what it claims to show.
- **sufficient**. Evidence must include all that is required by Part B of the unit.

However, as we have seen, IOLP is about process and performance rather than about product, which means that IOLP evidence has a rather different quality from evidence for the key skills qualifications. IOLP evidence must show how the candidate's skills developed and grew as a result of being involved in a learning activity and responding to problems. At all levels, the evidence must:

- **be holistic**. It must show the whole process, following through the three components of the unit.
- **show development over time**. Process skills take time to demonstrate. At Level 3, the substantial activity would be expected to take at least 3 months.
- **demonstrate individual performance**. It must show what the candidate did as an individual.

Forms of evidence

There are two main types of evidence that are particularly relevant to IOLP:

- evidence of the process, showing how the candidate has carried out learning activities. This could include authenticated candidate reports of the activity (eg action plans, learning logs), audio or video recordings, assessor observations or witness statements.
- outcomes of the process the candidate has followed. This might include hand-written or word-processed documents, something the candidate has made or built, or evidence of a newly acquired skill. The evidence may be in the form of a video or set of photographs, perhaps with a note of where the original can be seen.

It is important to note that evidence of outcomes alone is not enough. There must be evidence of process.

Oral questioning of the candidate can help to corroborate the portfolio evidence. The evidence of this oral assessment might be a recording or a written note from the assessor. This can be particularly helpful to support the internal verification and moderation processes.

A witness statement is a statement, signed by a competent person, which confirms that the student completed the activity in question (eg discussing and agreeing targets, or taking part in a review session). In most cases, the witness is also the assessor and the statement can form part of the portfolio of evidence. Where the witness is not the assessor, the statement should be judged for its purposefulness, authenticity, validity and sufficiency. The assessor must agree any witness statement by signing and dating the document, which may also be internally verified.

How much evidence?

Levels 1 and 2

The portfolio must contain two examples of meeting the standard for all three components in Part B. This means two distinct and separate activities, each with evidence that the candidate has planned, carried out and reviewed the activity.

Each activity must include evidence that the candidate has studied a straightforward subject and has learned through a straightforward practical activity. The essential difference is that 'study' is structured by the tutor, while 'practical activities' are student-centred and involve 'learning by doing' (*Guidance on the wider key skills* (QCA/01/735), pages 29 and 33). While some candidates may wish to evidence these two activities separately, careful reading of the Guidance to Part A of the unit shows that a learning activity that starts with presentations or demonstrations by the tutor, followed by practice sessions and real situations for the student, can meet the evidence requirement for both study and practical activity. As this is the format for a great deal of teaching and learning in schools and colleges, the study and practical aspects can be met within one activity. The timescale for this would be over a few weeks or less.

Level 3

At this level, the portfolio must contain evidence of at least one substantial example of meeting the standard for all three components in Part B, over a period of at least 3 months.

The candidate must have evidence that they have studied a complex subject (eg where the tutor has presented the information or structured the learning), and learned through a complex practical activity (ie learning by doing as at Levels 1 and 2). However, they must also show that they have taken responsibility for organising their own learning; this can be in the context either of study or of practical activity.

Figure 7. Providing evidence for study and practical activity at Levels 1 and 2

Task	Study	Practical activity
Learning how to use spreadsheets	Tutor input on use of software, using worksheets	Student practises and demonstrates spreadsheet skills in the context of a coursework assignment
Writing a history assignment on the role of technology in warfare, comparing the Gulf War with the Korean War	Tutor input on the changing impact of technology on warfare, using text-based resources	Student does research to compare the use of technology in the two wars, using IT and other sources in preparation for writing the assignment

SECTION 3 Getting started

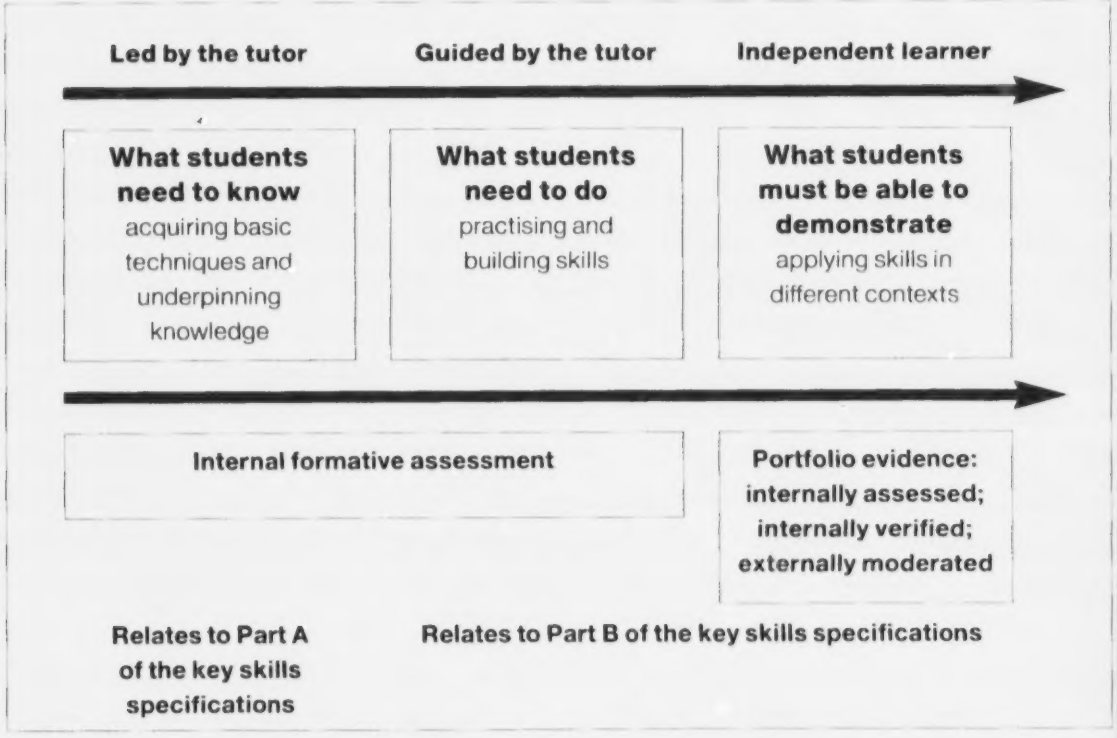
If you think of IOLP as a process, it is easy to see the benefits of introducing it to students early on in their programmes – preferably at induction. Students need to know what is expected of them. If you don't show students that you expect them to contribute to their own learning and performance from the start, it will be difficult to change their expectations in the future.

The approach to learning that IOLP encourages is already familiar to many students from earlier in their school careers. In colleges, IOLP can be introduced at the beginning of the first year of any course, bearing in mind that it may not be as new to some students as to others.

The key skills continuum

Figure 8 is a model of key skills development that demonstrates progression from learning the underpinning techniques of a key skill through to using the skills in a context and for a purpose.

Figure 8. A continuum of key skills development


Led by the tutor
Guided by the tutor
Independent learner
What students need to know
acquiring basic techniques and underpinning knowledge
What students need to do
practising and building skills
What students must be able to demonstrate
applying skills in different contexts
Internal formative assessment
Portfolio evidence: internally assessed; internally verified; externally moderated
Relates to Part A of the key skills specifications
Relates to Part B of the key skills specifications

The diagram should be read from left to right. It shows that the basic techniques and underpinning knowledge of the key skill have to be learned – possibly in simulated contexts. As students grow in confidence, they begin to move towards the middle of the continuum, practising the techniques in increasingly real situations. The aim is for all students to reach the right-hand end of the continuum, where they will be able to use the techniques they have learned in a variety of contexts and become independent learners at the level for which they aimed.

It is important to remember that this is a model. Like all models, it offers a framework to provide structure and guide discussion; it is not a set of rules. Different students will start from different points on the continuum, and each student will bring different experiences and skills to their learning of the IOLP process.

Like the three key skills qualifications, IOLP is underpinned by knowledge, understanding and techniques that have to be learned, practised and developed.
These skills are set out in Part A of the QCA specifications, but students won't learn them automatically. Many centres find that a timetabled tutorial for 1 hour each week is very helpful. This may focus on IOLP, but also include work on Working with Others and Problem Solving.

Induction and initial assessment

Before embarking on the learning that embodies IOLP, students will need to:

- understand what the key skill is about
- know the level for which they are aiming.

Induction

When students are first introduced to the key skills qualifications (Communication, Application of Number and Information Technology) they will already have some knowledge and experience of many of the relevant underpinning techniques. However, their understanding may not always be accurate and they may find it difficult to transfer their skills from one context to another.

In the case of IOLP, students will have a wide variety of experience and understanding of processes such as target-setting and action-planning. For example, students who have worked on Progress File or its predecessor (the National Record of Achievement) will be familiar with learning logs and progress reviews (see pages 13–14). Students without such experience may expect to be told what to learn and how to learn it and to receive a report only at the end of the course. These students will take time to adjust to the idea that they are expected to play an active part in planning their own learning programme and to reflect on and discuss their progress with a tutor at regular intervals.

Also, by contrast with the key skills qualifications, the underpinning skills of IOLP may be more subtle. It is helpful to involve students in structured tasks and assignments that simultaneously:

- illustrate to the student what IOLP is about (induction)
- help you to assess the level of competence that each student brings to the activity (initial assessment).

Examples of induction activities for IOLP at Levels 1–3 are available on the KSSP website at www.keyskillssupport.net

Initial assessment

Tutors need a range of tools and techniques to help build a picture of each student's attainment and potential. These may include:

- **documentary information.** Qualifications, records of achievement (including Progress File) and references can all provide useful information about the skills and abilities that students bring to their programmes.
- **one-to-one interviews and discussions, and self-assessment.** The student's own views should be taken seriously and are an important contribution to the whole picture. They also give tutors a starting point for setting or agreeing some initial targets, thus introducing the IOLP process from the beginning of the programme.

New College Swindon has embedded IOLP into the tutorial programme for 800 students in the first year of their course. Students on advanced programmes aim for Level 3, while students on intermediate and foundation programmes aim for Level 1 or 2.

Each student has a personal tutor who is responsible for overseeing the development, tracking and assessment of IOLP. At the start of the course, the tutor holds a whole-class tutorial to:

- explain the purpose of IOLP and the process of developing and assessing it
- issue an evidence matrix and explain what students need to know and do
- help students to carry out a skills audit
- complete and discuss a questionnaire about learning styles, based on the work of Honey and Mumford.

Each student then has a one-to-one tutorial with the tutor to discuss, agree and write down:

- their personal targets
- where they might find any information they need
- factors that might affect the achievement of the targets and how they might be overcome.

Next, the student writes an action plan. This is signed by both the student and the tutor to confirm agreement that targets are realistic, an action plan has been drawn up and dates for the first two review meetings have been set.

Students maintain a learning log, commenting on topics such as:

- the quality of their learning and performance to date in relation to their targets
- the methods they have used to learn
- the factors that have affected the outcome of learning
- the targets they have met to date and the evidence of achievement
- how they sought and used feedback.

Throughout the course, the underpinning knowledge and understanding of IOLP is developed through:

- group tutorials
- one-to-one tutorials
- study skills packs, which are available in all curriculum team and library areas.

Tutors discuss with students how techniques learned in one subject (eg mind-mapping or bullet-pointing) can be transferred to other subjects.

One-to-one progress reviews are held every half term. These are based on the information that the student has recorded in their log. There is a section in the log for the tutor to provide advice about how the student might improve performance towards their targets before the next progress review. Both the student and the tutor sign and date the log and the review.

SECTION 4 Setting targets and making plans

Why are these skills important?

The ability to set targets and make plans is the first step to improving own learning and performance in any context.

- If students don't know what they are aiming to achieve, they cannot know whether they have achieved it.
- If they don't have a plan, they cannot review how well it worked and learn from the experience.

Effective plans:

- have SMART targets
- clearly set out what needs to be done to achieve the targets.

SMART targets

The acronym **SMART** is often used to describe an effective target. Targets should be:

Specific – outlining exactly what the student aims to do, rather than expressing vague general aims

Measurable – outlining how the student will know they have met the targets, and what evidence will show this

Achievable – challenging for the student, but not too difficult

Realistic – the opportunities and resources should be available

Time-bound – there should be both interim and final deadlines.

Targets can be even SMART**ER**. They can be:

Enjoyable

Rewarding.

The ability to set targets is central to IOLP and is the basis of the first component at all levels. As students progress through the levels they need to take increasing responsibility for setting targets.

- At Level 1, students are expected to 'confirm understanding of short-term targets' with the person who sets them.
- At Level 2, students are expected to 'help set short-term targets' with an appropriate person.
- At Level 3, students are expected to 'agree targets' to be achieved over an extended period of time (about 3 months).

What do students need to know?

While it is essential that you, the tutor, are familiar with Part A of the specification, and that students have their own copy when they are ready to use it, it may be helpful in the early stages of a programme to simplify the target-setting process. At all levels, students need to know that setting targets and making plans is about clarifying:

- **why** you want to do an activity
- **what** you want to achieve by the end of the activity (your target)
- **when** you intend to complete the activity (the deadline)
- **how** you are going to approach the activity (the plan you make)
- **what** resources you will need
- **what** problems may arise
- **who** will support you as you carry out the activity and **when** you will see them.

Practical techniques

Techniques for agreeing targets

You probably already use tutorial sessions to help students think about organising their time to achieve targets for learning and assessment – even if this is usually a matter of chasing them to meet deadlines.

In a group situation, you could help students to understand how to convert general aims into targets that are SMART. So, for example, having explained the SMART acronym, you could divide students into pairs. Ask each student to think of a general aim related to their work. At Level 3, this could relate to work to be undertaken in the coming term. At Levels 1 and 2, the timescale can be shorter. Then ask one member of each pair to help the other turn their aim into a SMART target by asking them a series of questions.

How to smarten a Level 3 target

General aim

Student 1: 'I'll hand in all my coursework assignments on time this term.'

Specific

Student 2: 'What assignments do you have?'

Student 1: 'Business project, an English extended essay and a psychology report.'

Measurable

Student 2: 'How long do these have to be? How will you know when you have finished them?'

Student 1: 'I'll have to check the coursework requirements in the specification.'

Achievable

Student 2: 'How can you avoid overloading yourself with work?'

Student 1: 'I'll have to check the deadlines I have been given and work out a way of phasing the work.'

Realistic

Student 2: 'Do you have the resources you need for this work?'

Student 1: 'I'll need to check that I have the right books and reference materials.'

Time-bound

Student 2: 'When do you have to hand them in?'

Student 1: 'I'll have to double-check that.'

Having answered these questions, the two students can work together to redraft the general aim as a set of SMART targets that clarify how the component tasks (ie the three assignments and the tasks within each) relate to each other and how Student 1 will identify and assemble the resources needed. The next step is to make plans for each piece of work that will result in the targets being met.

When students are using SMART with confidence, help them to use it in other contexts and for longer-term plans. Get to know their hopes and aspirations, and help them to convert these into SMART targets for, for example, saving up for a holiday, or learning a new skill for work or leisure.

Techniques for making plans

While action-planning is an invaluable skill to develop, it is important that it does not become an end in itself – 'I've written the plan, so the job's done'.

Action plans come in all shapes and sizes but all should contain:

- **SMART targets outlining what the student wants to achieve**
- **action points showing exactly what the student will do to reach their target and when they will do it**
- **a date for achieving their target.**

Action plans will vary in detail and complexity at each level of IOLP. However, at every level, the first stage is to identify the steps that need to be taken to get the task done. It is often helpful to begin by brainstorming and sketching a rough diagram, with boxes and arrows, rather than by trying to list the steps in order. The diagram can be changed and added to until the steps become apparent.

At Levels 1 and 2, action plans will be relatively simple. For example, they might involve the student completing a simple pro forma, listing the steps in the first column and making appropriate entries in the other columns. The column headings should enable the essential questions to be answered.

- What am I aiming to do? (my targets)
- What have I got to do to achieve them?
- Who can support me with this?
- What other help or resources will I need?
- When will I review my progress?
- What will the outcome be?
- When must it be done by?

At Level 3, it is more appropriate for the student to present an action plan that addresses the same types of questions but in a format which they have prepared and which suits them, with the tutor providing less guidance and structure.

Successful action-planning typically starts from the end date and works backwards from there. If this process reveals that a deadline is impossible to meet, then the student must review their targets and deadlines, asking which deadlines are fixed and which are negotiable. This process may be prompted by a review session that monitors the student's progress with the action plan.

It is possible that a student's action plan for IOLP can meet the evidence requirement in Communication (Level 2) for a written document (not extended) about a straightforward subject. However, the action plan would have to meet all the relevant assessment criteria for Communication 2.3.

What does portfolio evidence look like?

Evidence could include:

at Level 1

- notes or a log that shows that the student checked their understanding of targets and knew how to get support. This might be written by the student and confirmed by the tutor/assessor
- two action plans, each with at least two short-term targets, with action points, deadlines and dates for reviewing progress.

at Level 2

- notes or a log or record that shows the accurate information the student provided when helping to set targets
- two action plans, each with at least two short-term targets, with action points, deadlines, notes of support needed and arrangements for reviewing progress.

at Level 3

- records which show how the candidate sought, obtained and used information to devise and agree their targets
- an action plan for an extended period of time (eg about 3 months), including at least two targets, alternative courses of action, notes of support needed and at least two dates for reviewing progress.

While there is no standard requirement for the format in which IOLP evidence should be presented, your awarding body may have produced pro formas. You may wish to use these as they stand or to adapt them to your local context. For contact details, please see Appendix 2.

SECTION 5 Following the plan and using support

Why are these skills important?

The ability to:

- follow a plan
- ask for and use support when it is needed
- try out different ways of learning, and
- make changes to improve performance

is central to IOLP at every level. Students should become self-motivating and develop independence, while knowing when to ask for advice and support.

What do students need to know?

At every level, the underpinning techniques for this stage of the IOLP process are:

- following a plan and meeting deadlines
- managing time
- knowing when to ask for help or advice
- being able to accept and make use of feedback
- knowing when to change a plan
- knowing about and using different ways of learning.

Tutors can help students to develop these techniques.

Following a plan and meeting deadlines

The amount of support students will need, and how much you should give, will vary between the levels.

At Level 1, students have to work through given action points. It is helpful if you have a copy of each student's action plan and check at frequent intervals whether they are on schedule.

At Levels 2 and 3, students are expected to take more responsibility for meeting deadlines with less prompting from you, though you can give Level 2 students more support than Level 3 students. For example, you can let Level 2 students know that you will be available at particular times to give advice if they decide they need it. Students need to learn how to make use of review and feedback, and to recognise if they need to revise their plan. You need to strike a balance between not leaving students to 'sink' and making sure they retain ownership of their targets and plan.

Managing time

In order to manage their time effectively, students need to know how to:

- plan ahead
- make a realistic estimate of how long a particular task will take
- prioritise tasks
- get started
- work to deadlines
- minimise distractions.

Planning ahead: keeping a 'to do' list

Writing a list of what needs to be done can be discouraging, but ticking tasks off as they are completed can be very rewarding. Students should be encouraged to experiment with this technique. However, they may need to be reminded that new items should be added to 'to do' lists as they arise. A 'to do' list is not like a shopping list; it is never finished.

Estimating how long a task will take

It can be difficult to estimate the time needed to carry out a task. Students may find it helpful to fill in a log of how they are actually spending their time over a week or two, for example. Helping them to analyse the results and to identify how long they spent on a task such as planning and writing an essay or report can help them learn from experience and use their time more effectively in future. When a student has a reasonable idea of how long a task will take, this can be noted on the 'to do' list.

Prioritising

Tutors can introduce students to the idea of ranking each item on the 'to do' list in order of priority.

It is also worth identifying the tasks that can be done quickly or that are enjoyable. These can be used as rewards when ploughing through a major task becomes discouraging. Students, like everyone else, will need to be reassured that even the most impossibly long 'to do' list can be tackled one step at a time.

To do on Monday	How long?
Go to cash machine	1 hour
Write plan for business project	3 hours
Call John re next weekend	10 minutes
Catch up with learning log	half an hou
Search internet for material for sociology essay	1 hour
Edit final draft of history coursework	2 hours
Go to geography class pm	2 hours

Priority 1	Urgent and important ▸▸▸▸▸▸▸▸ Do it now
Priority 2	Urgent but not important ▸▸▸▸▸▸ Do it as soon as you have time
Priority 3	Important but not urgent ▸▸▸▸▸▸ Start it before it becomes urgent
Priority 4	Not important and not urgent ▸▸▸ Leave for another day

(Based on the University of Surrey Skills Project pilot pack)
www.surrey.ac.uk/skills/pack/iolp.html

Priority
3
1
4
2
3
3
1

Getting started

Most people find it difficult to get started on a new task, especially if it is routine or particularly arduous. Students might find the following tips helpful.

- Promise yourself in advance that you will start at a particular time (perhaps on the hour) and make sure you are at your desk at that time.
- Make sure you have everything you need ready at the start. Opening a new file or replacing an ink cartridge are excellent excuses for delaying the start of the real work. It's called 'avoidance behaviour'.
- At the end of each session, make a note of what you will do to start the next session.
- Set interim targets when undertaking a substantial piece of work.

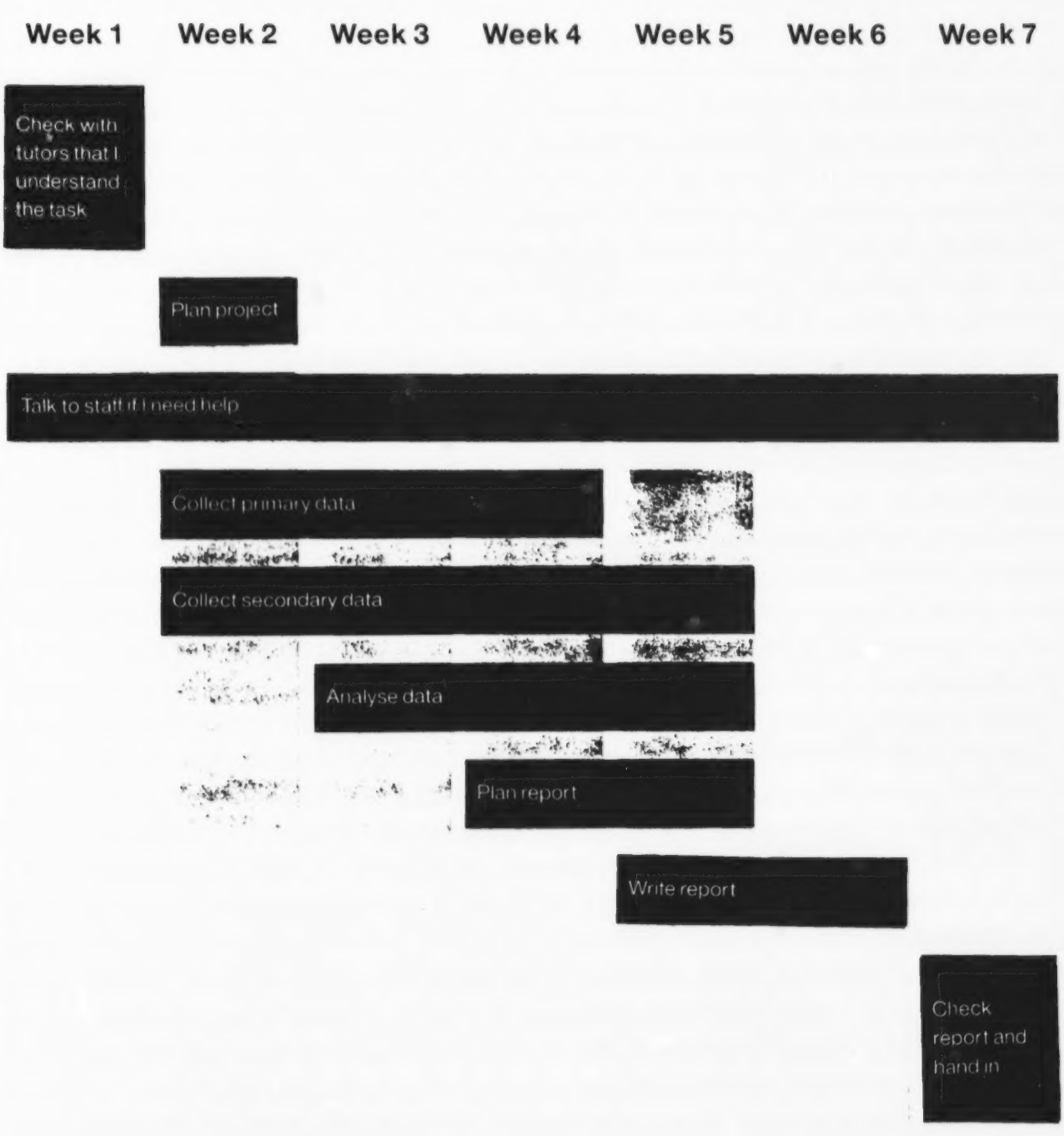
Working to deadlines

The first skill needed here is the ability to set realistic deadlines. Obviously, this depends on the prior skills of estimating how long a task will take and prioritising.

Once that is achieved, it is helpful to set intermediate deadlines (or 'milestones') related to relatively short and defined periods of work. When the milestones and deadlines are in place, there is no particular method of learning how to work to them. It is mainly a matter of self-discipline, though a small self-awarded prize can be a good motivator – 'If I get this done by 4pm, I'll take the rest of the day off'.

Students working at Level 3 may be able to make use of tools such as electronic Gantt charts to help them identify and plan milestones and deadlines. However, there is always the risk that perfecting the chart on screen becomes an end in itself, leaving too little time for the actual work to be done. A do-it-yourself Gantt-style chart, as shown in figure 9, is equally helpful.

Figure 9. Gantt-style chart for a research project



Minimising distractions

One person's distraction is another's comfort blanket. Some students work better when they are listening to music; some prefer silence. Some like the sociable buzz of a library; others prefer the isolation of their own room. The best advice you can give is that students should experiment with a range of working situations rather than stick with the one they are used to, and that they should be open to the possibility that a change may be beneficial.

Essentially, what everyone needs is to find the working environment that suits them and stick to it. On the other hand, certain self-imposed rules such as 'switch off the mobile phone' can only be helpful.

Remind students that a personal diary or log, which shows how they experimented with different working environments (time, place and context) and what they learned about what suited them best, can be valuable evidence for their IOLP portfolio.

Knowing when to ask for help or advice and being able to accept and make use of feedback

To improve learning and performance, it is essential that students know how well they are doing. This means asking for, getting and using feedback on their performance from people they trust.

The opportunity for students to develop these skills depends largely on you offering positive and encouraging feedback. If a student's first experience of asking for and receiving one-to-one support is positive, they will come back for more and, perhaps as importantly, tell other students about it. They need to learn that asking for help is not a sign of failure.

See page 37 for a discussion on formative assessment and giving constructive feedback.

Knowing when to change a plan

As with asking for help, students may need to be encouraged to recognise that:

- changing a plan is not an admission of failure
- recognising when you are in a blind alley saves a lot of time
- they don't have to wait for a formal review before they change a plan.

Changing a plan is not an admission of failure.

Knowing about and using different ways of learning

We all learn things in different ways and have our own preferred ways of doing things. However, as a tutor, your aim is to encourage students to become effective learners, equipped with a variety of approaches. This means encouraging them to be flexible in their approach and to try out new and different ways of learning things.

- **At Level 1, students are expected to 'use different ways of learning suggested by your supervisor' and 'use methods that suit different learning styles' in the context of straightforward subjects and practical activities.**
- **At Level 2, students are expected to 'select and use different ways of learning' and 'use methods that suit different learning styles' in the context of straightforward subjects and practical activities.**
- **At Level 3, students are expected to 'select and use different ways of learning' and 'use methods that suit different learning styles' in the context of complex subjects and practical activities.**

Section 1 describes some of the models of different learning styles. While it is seldom appropriate to give a formal lesson on these, students need to know that:

- there are different ways of learning
- they may prefer to learn in a different way from that which they are used to
- there are no right or wrong ways to learn, but some may be more successful than others for particular people in particular situations
- successful students can adapt and use the styles that suit them best.

Helping students to recognise a range of ways of learning

As a stimulus for discussion, invite students to complete and discuss the following quick quiz.

I learn best by:	Agree	Disagree
getting straight on with the job		
reading		
discussion		
taking notes and thinking it through		
trial and error		
mastering a technique before putting it into practice		
working on my own		
working in a group		
working on a one-to-one basis		

When considering the statements, many students will want to say 'it depends on what I'm learning'. This gives you the opening for a discussion about how different learning styles are appropriate to different tasks. For example, watching a competent person assemble a flat-pack of furniture as they give a running commentary, with the opportunity to ask questions, is for many people a better way of learning the skill than trial and error or even relying on the instruction book.

It can be particularly productive to discuss how students prefer to learn different skills, for example how to use IT software or play computer games.

Many tools for self-assessment of learning styles can be found on the internet. Most of these tools are better used to stimulate discussion than to give definitive diagnoses.

What does portfolio evidence look like?

Evidence could include:

at Level 1

- a learning log with notes of the support the student was given
- records from people who have seen the student's work which show that they completed tasks on time and made any suggested changes.

at Level 2

- a learning log with notes of:
  - when the student asked for support and how they used it
  - when and how the student worked without close supervision
  - any changes the student made to their plan
- records from people who have seen the student's work which show that they managed their time well and completed tasks.

at Level 3

- records of information the student provided on their progress and achievements; notes of how they used learning from one task to meet the demands of a new task, and ways they think they have improved, or could improve, their performance
- examples of work that show what the student learned from studying two subjects and two practical learning activities
- notes on the student's action plans to show the targets they have met.

While there is no standard requirement for the format in which IOLP evidence should be presented, your awarding body may have produced pro formas. You may wish to use these as they stand or to adapt them to your local context. For contact details, please see Appendix 2.

SECTION 6 Reviewing progress and learning from experience

Why are these skills important?

The review process underpins the whole of IOLP. Reviewing progress at intervals throughout the learning activity helps learners to:

- identify their achievements
- revise targets, plans and timescales if necessary
- reflect on and learn from experience.

IOLP is all about being aware of your own learning and performance in the real working environment. The specific skill that students need is the ability to reflect on what they do and to learn from this.

Reviewing progress is an ongoing process that involves:

- looking back over what has been done
- revising targets if necessary
- reconsidering ways of achieving targets in the light of this experience.

It is central to the process of formative assessment, which is described on page 37. However, the benefits of reflecting on one's own experience can only be seen over a period of time and by looking back at what has changed and what has been learned. Many students will want only to solve the immediate problem and look forward; they will need encouragement to stick with the review process until they begin to notice the changes and improvements in their own performance.

Students need to learn how they learn best.

- **At Level 1, students are expected to 'review your progress and achievements ... say what you learned ... check what you need to do to improve'.**
- **At Level 2, students are expected to 'review progress ... provide evidence of your achievements ... identify what you have learned ... identify ways to further improve your performance'.**
- **At Level 3, students are expected to 'review progress on at least two occasions ... establish evidence of achievements ... provide information on the quality of your learning and performance ... agree ways to further improve your performance'.**

How you can help students to review their progress

The skills needed for reviewing students' progress are the same as those already widely used by form or personal tutors. IOLP gives the process more structure than it may otherwise have. The form or personal tutor is the person best placed to support the student as they develop their IOLP skills and to help them to record the process in a form that is appropriate to their portfolio.

The main obstacle to effective feedback is that we defend ourselves against the possibility of negative feedback and so don't listen. On the other hand, feedback might be presented in a way that results in a defensive reaction. Both the giver and the receiver of feedback have to develop their skills.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is the ongoing assessment of a student's learning and progress, unlike summative assessment, which is carried out at the end of a learning module or programme and determines the level of a student's achievements at a given time. For IOLP, summative assessment is done through the portfolio (see page 40).

Formative assessment is at the heart of IOLP and the other wider key skills. All three skills involve the student and their tutor in a process of exchanging feedback on the student's performance, reflecting and reviewing progress.

Formative assessment is sometimes described as 'assessment for learning', whereas summative assessment is 'assessment of learning'. The QCA website has a section on assessment for learning, with a range of materials, articles and related sources at www.qca.org.uk/ca/5-14/afl

Through formative assessment, the student should become aware of:

- when they have succeeded
- the standard they are aiming for
- what skills they need to do more work on.

Giving constructive feedback

The secret of effective formative assessment is giving constructive feedback.

For the tutor, giving constructive feedback means:

- inviting the student to speak first
- praising good work; not just correcting errors
- confirming where the student is on the right track
- encouraging a dialogue
- focusing on the task rather than on the student
- giving specific advice on mistakes and ways of correcting them
- having regular sessions, while the material is still relevant
- giving the student the opportunity to ask for further help
- providing encouragement
- keeping notes and agreeing them with the student.

For the student, receiving feedback constructively means:

- listening to the feedback without comment before trying to explain or justify what has happened
- asking for clarification when they need it
- specifying what they want to change
- asking for help and support where they need it
- keeping notes and agreeing them with the tutor.

(Based on the University of Surrey Skills Project pilot pack www.surrey.ac.uk/skills/pack/feedback.html)

Providing good quality feedback on a one-to-one basis is a time-consuming process, so you may wish to consider also making use of other methods such as peer assessment or assisted self-assessment. These not only free up your time but they are also very effective ways of engaging students in their own learning.

For formative assessment to be effective, it is important that:

- students are aware of the purpose of review
- students know and understand the relevant sections of the key skills assessment criteria, of which they should have their own copy
- you give students feedback on their progress against the criteria
- you pitch the feedback at the appropriate level
- you give students advice and guidance on how they can improve.

The language of assessment criteria is often difficult for a student to understand so you may wish to:

- provide examples of work that meets the assessment criteria, perhaps from previous students
- interpret and discuss the assessment criteria using language appropriate to the student.

Item 3.12 of the KSSP's *Key skills resource manual* is a resource for training tutors to give constructive feedback.

How to use the information from reviews

Reviews and formative assessment will provide information that will enable you and the student to monitor their progress. It is, therefore, important that there is a record of formative assessment that is shared between you and your student.

You should record the:

- date of the tutorial
- the feedback you gave on the student's work
- the student's response to this feedback
- details of the skills the student has effectively acquired and what they have learned
- details of where the student has more work to do.

This record should be signed by you both. It is crucial evidence of the process of IOLP and can form part of the portfolio evidence.

Practical techniques for tutorials and review sessions

A review session with a student at any level of IOLP can be structured round a set of simple questions.

- What have you been doing since we last met?
- What went well? Why?
- What went less well? Why?
- What was particularly challenging?
- What will you do as a result?
- What have you learned from this?
- What might you do differently next time?

Students will be able to respond to these questions more effectively if they have kept a reflective diary of their activities or a learning log. It may be useful to help students identify 'key incidents' since the last review, as this gives a good starting point for looking at performance and progress in more detail. Key incidents can, of course, be either positive or negative but both provide opportunities for learning and improving performance.

Planning a reflective diary

- Choose a format – book or loose-leaf file?
- Decide whether to use standard questions for each entry – eg some of those on page 38.
- Distinguish description (this is what happened) from reflection (this is what I think about it) – perhaps by using two columns.
- Decide how often to make entries – for example, daily or weekly.
- Decide when and where is the best time to write the diary.

What does portfolio evidence look like?

Evidence could include:

at Level 1

- records of:

  what the student said about their progress and achievements, what they learned and how they learned it

  what they will do to improve their performance (this could be checked through oral questioning). This could include an audio recording

- examples of work which show what the student learned from studying two subjects and two practical learning activities
- notes on the student's action plans to show the targets they have met.

at Level 2

- records of information the student provided on their progress and achievements, how they used learning from one task to meet the demands of a new task, and how they plan to improve their performance. This could include an audio recording
- examples of work which show what the student learned from studying two subjects and two practical learning activities
- notes on their action plans to show the targets they have met.

at Level 3

- records of information the student provided on the quality of their learning and performance, including how they used learning from other tasks to meet new demands. This could include an audio recording
- work which show what they learned from studying a complex subject, a practical activity and from independent learning
- records which show how they sought to establish evidence of their achievements and exchanged views on ways to improve their performance
- notes on their action plans to show the targets they have met.

While there is no standard requirement for the format in which IOLP evidence should be produced, your awarding body may have produced pro formas. You may wish to use these as they stand or to adapt them to your local context. For contact details, please see Appendix 2.

SECTION 7 Preparing the portfolio

The main principles of preparing a portfolio for IOLP are no different from those for a portfolio for one of the key skills qualifications. These are explained in the *Good practice guide: developing and managing portfolios*, published by KSSP.

Essentially, an IOLP portfolio should include:

1. an index or front-sheet, showing where the evidence can be found in the portfolio or another location
2. sufficient evidence that the candidate has achieved the required standard in Part B of the IOLP unit they are aiming for
3. descriptions of the learning activities the candidate undertook, or an explanation of the context in which the evidence was produced
4. the candidate's work, including evidence of planning, support, feedback, questioning, development and review
5. assessment sheets and records
6. records of internal verification.

You should check these requirements with your awarding body, which may be able to provide suitable pro formas for points 1, 5 and 6 above.

However, as has been emphasised throughout this publication, IOLP is more about process than product, so the evidence has to demonstrate the process. Each example of meeting the standard, at every level, should follow through all three components of the specification and thus be holistic.

In the absence of a written test, the evidence will normally include a record of an assessor's oral questioning of the candidate to check their understanding of:

- aspects of Part A of the unit
- the knowledge and skills they have learned from their various activities
- what they need to do to continue to improve.

Some examples of what might be included as evidence for each component of IOLP can be found on pages 28, 35 and 39. A summary of the amount of evidence that is required appears on pages 19–20. For detailed guidance on what assessors will be looking for in IOLP portfolios, see *Guidance on the wider key skills* (QCA/01/735), pages 30–31, 34–35 and 38–39.

As suggested in section 4, IOLP provides an excellent way of structuring the process of planning and working towards the achievement of any of the other key skills, or indeed for any subject involving coursework. If students are to see IOLP as purposeful, there can be no better way of demonstrating this than to integrate it into another area of the curriculum.

Portfolio evidence: differentiating across the levels

Figure 10 reproduces Part B of the IOLP specifications. For the purposes of this guide, the words that denote the level and where each level builds on the one below are printed in bold text.

Figure 10. Part B of the IOLP specifications

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
You must provide at least **two examples** of meeting the standard for LP1.1, LP1.2 and LP1.3.	You must provide at least **two examples** of meeting the standard for LP2.1, LP2.2 and LP2.3.	You must provide at least **one substantial example** of meeting the standard for LP3.1, LP3.2 and LP3.3.
Confirm understanding of your **short-term** targets and **plan** how these will be met, **with the person setting them**.	**Help set short-term targets** and **plan** how these will be met.	**Agree** targets and **plan** how these will be met **over an extended period** of time, **using support** from appropriate people.
Follow your plan, using support given by others to help meet targets. Improve your performance by: studying a **straightforward subject** learning through a **straightforward practical activity**.	**Take responsibility for some decisions** about your learning, **using** your plan and **support from others** to help meet targets Improve your performance by: studying a **straightforward subject** learning through a **straightforward practical activity**.	**Take responsibility** for your learning by using your plan, and **seeking feedback and support** from relevant sources, to help meet targets. Improve your performance by: studying a **complex subject** learning through a **complex** practical activity **further** study or practical activity that involves **independent learning**.
Review your progress and achievements in meeting targets with an appropriate person.	Review progress with an appropriate person and **provide evidence of your achievements**, including **how you have used learning** from one task to meet the demands of a new task.	Review progress **on two occasions** and **establish evidence of achievements**, including how you have used learning from other tasks to **meet new demands**.

Appendix 1

Glossary

Advanced Advanced-level qualifications are at Level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework and include AS levels, A-levels, vocational A-levels, NVQs at Level 3 and key skills at Level 3.

Assessment (a) *Formative assessment* This is part of the feedback that a tutor provides during a learning programme to help the candidate reflect on and review their progress. It is often referred to as 'assessment **for** learning' – in contrast to 'assessment **of** learning' or summative assessment. Evidence of how a student has responded to and learned from formative assessment is an important component of the IOLP portfolio. (b) *Summative assessment* This is the assessment that determines whether a candidate has achieved the standard for which they were aiming and, if appropriate, with what grade.

Assessor The person responsible for the initial judgement of a candidate's performance against standards which have been defined by the awarding body. These are normally expressed as assessment criteria or mark schemes.

Awarding body There are 18 awarding bodies offering key skills qualifications, including the Unitary Awarding Bodies in England (AQA, Edexcel and OCR), WJEC in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland. They are listed on the QCA website (www.qca.org.uk).

Basic skills Literacy and numeracy provision which caters for the literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy needs of all post-16 learners, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, from pre-entry level up to and including Level 2. This includes all forms of provision, whether delivered as stand-alone, or part of a vocational programme or bolt-on course, and whether delivered full-time, part-time, or through self-study or ICT.

Complex For the wider key skills, complex subjects and activities are ones where the objectives or targets usually need to be agreed with others. Problems will have a number of sub-problems and will be affected by a range of factors. The tasks involved and the relationships between them may not be immediately clear. Situations and resources may be unfamiliar.
QCA (2001). *Guidance on the wider key skills – levels 1–4*, page 11 (QCA/01/735).

H8

Extended period In the context of the wider key skills at Level 3, an extended period of time is about 3 months.
QCA (2001). *Guidance on the wider key skills – levels 1–4*, pages 24 and 38 (QCA/01/735).

External assessment In the key skills qualifications, the tests are the external assessment and they corroborate the internal assessment. There is no external assessment for the wider key skills, but see also *Moderation*.

Fitness for purpose Key skills portfolio evidence should be appropriate for the wider context and purpose for which it was produced. See also *Purposeful*.

Foundation Foundation-level qualifications are at Level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework and include GCSEs at grades D–G, Foundation GNVQs, NVQs at Level 1 and key skills at Level 1.

Grade There are no grades for key skills.

Intermediate Intermediate-level qualifications are at Level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework and include GCSEs at grades A*–C, Intermediate GNVQs, NVQs at Level 2 and key skills at Level 2.

Internal assessment Internal assessment of key skills is organised by the centre. It focuses on the requirements of Part B of the specifications, is based on a portfolio of evidence, is internally assessed and externally moderated.

Internal verification This is the process through which an identified person in a centre ensures that the standards of assessment in the centre are consistent both across the centre and with national standards. Key skills internal verifiers do not require particular qualifications but should be competent at the level of key skill that they are verifying. The awarding bodies offer training for internal verifiers. An internal verifier is often referred to as an 'IV'.

Interpersonal skills Candidates for the wider key skills are encouraged to develop and apply their interpersonal skills, eg skills in communicating their ideas and needs to others, negotiating support when needed, resolving conflict and avoiding discrimination.
QCA (2001). *Guidance on the wider key skills – levels 1–4*, page 8 (QCA/01/735).
See also *Process skills*.

Moderation The process through which internal assessment is monitored by an awarding body to ensure that it is valid, reliable, fair and consistent with the required national standards. Each centre will be allocated a standards moderator for key skills. This role is sometimes referred to as an external verifier.

National Qualifications Framework The National Qualifications Framework was created by the 1997 Education Act and includes all external qualifications that are regulated by QCA (ACCAC in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland), plus degrees and other higher-level qualifications that are regulated by the universities and QAA. The wider key skills are currently not included in the National Qualifications Framework.

Objectives The purposes for working together that are shared by the people involved in an activity. They may be set by an organisation, a tutor, supervisor or project leader, or by members of the group or team. QCA (2001). *Guidance on the wider key skills – levels 1–4*, page 14 (QCA/01/735).

Portfolio Candidates have to organise and present evidence of how they have met the requirements of the key skills specifications, usually in a portfolio. This may take the form of a file or may be an electronically based storage and retrieval system.

Process skills All the wider key skills specifications include process skills, eg skills in planning, organising and carrying out activities, and reviewing progress. These skills are the main focus of assessment. QCA (2001). *Guidance on the wider key skills – levels 1–4*, page 8 (QCA/01/735). See also *Interpersonal skills*.

Purposeful Key skills evidence must be generated in the context of a task or activity that satisfies some purpose in the student's work or leisure. Evidence that is collected simply to satisfy the requirements of the key skills portfolio is not purposeful and does not meet the assessment requirement.

Specification The complete description – including mandatory and optional aspects – of the content, the assessment arrangements and the performance requirements for a qualification. In the past, this has often been referred to as a 'syllabus'.

Straightforward (a) *Straightforward subjects and materials* are those that the student often meets in work, studies or other activities. The main points are easy to identify, usually with simple sentences and familiar vocabulary. QCA (2002). *The key skills qualifications specifications and guidance*, page 19 (QCA/02/896).
(b) *Straightforward activities* are ones where the objectives, targets or problems are given or easily identified. It is clear how to break the work down into manageable tasks. Situations and resources are usually familiar. QCA (2001). *Guidance on the wider key skills – levels 1–4*, page 11 (QCA01/735).

Targets The steps for helping a student to achieve their personal, learning or career goals. Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). QCA (2001). *Guidance on the wider key skills – levels 1–4*, page 28/32 (QCA/01/735).

Tests Assessment of the key skills qualifications includes a written test (see *External assessment*). Details can be found on the QCA website. There are no tests for the wider key skills.

Transferable Key skills are transferable. This means that once a student has developed a skill for the purpose of one context, they should be able to identify when and how to apply the same skill for another purpose in another context.

Appendix 2

Useful addresses

ACCAC (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales)
Castle Buildings, Womanby Street, Cardiff
CF10 1SX
Tel 029 2037 5400
www.ccw.org.uk

ALI (Adult Learning Inspectorate)
Spring Place, Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UD
Tel 0870 240 7744
www.ali.gov.uk

AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance)
Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX
Tel 0161 953 1180
Publications 0161 953 1170
www.aqa.org.uk

ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network)
Wainbrook House, Hudds Vale Road,
St George, Bristol BS5 7HY
Tel 0117 941 1126
Publications 0117 941 1448
www.asdan.co.uk

CCEA (Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment)
Clarendon Dock, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast
BT1 3BG
Tel 028 9026 1200
Publications 028 9026 1228
www.ccea.org.uk

City & Guilds
1 Giltspur Street, London EC1A 9DD
Tel 020 7294 2800
www.city-and-guilds.co.uk

DfES (Department for Education and Skills)
Key Skills Policy Team, Room E3c,
Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel 0114 259 3542
Publications 0845 602 2260
www.dfes.gov.uk/keyskills

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme
Gulliver House, Madeira Walk
Windsor, Berkshire SL4 1EU
Tel 01753 727400
www.theaward.cix.co.uk

Edexcel
Stewart House, 32 Russell Square, London
WC1B 5DN
Tel 0870 240 9800
Publications 01623 467467
www.edexcel.org.uk

Key Skills Support Programme (LSDA)
Regent Arcade House, 19–25 Argyll Street,
London W1F 7LS
Key Skills Helpline 0870 872 8081
kssp@LSDA.org.uk
www.keyskillssupport.net

Key Skills Support Programme
(Learning for Work)
6 Hemdean Road, Caversham,
Reading RG4 7SX
Helpline 0118 947 2000
www.keyskillssupport.net

LSC (Learning and Skills Council)
Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road,
Coventry CV1 2WT
Tel 0845 019 4170
www.lsc.gov.uk

LSDA (Learning and Skills Development Agency)
Regent Arcade House, 19–25 Argyll Street,
London W1F 7LS
Information Services 020 7297 9144
enquiries @LSDA.org.uk
www.LSDA.org.uk

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Coventry Office, Westwood Way,
Coventry CV4 8JQ
Tel 024 7647 0033
Publications 0870 870 6622
www.ocr.org.uk

Ofsted
Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway,
London WC2B 6SE
Tel 020 7421 6800
Publications 0700 263 7833
www.ofsted.gov.uk

QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)
83 Piccadilly, London W1J 8QA
Tel 020 7509 5555
Publications 01787 884444
www.qca.org.uk/keyskills

UCAS
(Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)
Rosehill, New Barn Lane,
Cheltenham GL52 3LZ
Tel 01242 222444
Publications 01242 544903
www.ucas.ac.uk

Young Enterprise
Peterley House
Peterley Road
Oxford OX4 2TZ
Tel 01865 776845
www.young-enterprise.org.uk

The Key Skills Support Programme

This support programme for post-16 schools and colleges is funded by the Department for Education and Skills and the European Union Social Fund. The Programme provides teachers, lecturers and managers with information, advice, materials and training. The priorities of the Programme are to:

- raise awareness and understanding of key skills
- provide practical advice, solutions, exemplars and models
- produce materials on teaching and learning key skills
- provide training in the form of conferences, workshops, courses and regional training.

A dedicated Key Skills Helpline is available on 0870 872 8081 every weekday to answer questions on key skills and provide information updates. The website on www.keyskillssupport.net provides news and information on key skills developments, resources, publications, frequently asked questions, training and network activities, contacts and links. Newsletters are published on a termly basis and are sent to all post-16 schools and colleges in England.

Research on key skills development and delivery is undertaken through development projects and action research in schools and colleges.

There are links with the awarding bodies and with the parallel support programme for trainers in work-based learning, managed by Learning for Work (tel 0118 947 2000).

How to find out more

You can contact the **Key Skills Helpline Tel 0870 872 8081 kssp@LSDA.org.uk www.keyskillssupport.net**

or the **Key Skills Support Programme team**:

Deirdre Kimbell
executive manager
Tel 020 7297 9053
dkimbell@LSDA.org.uk

Judy Carrick
development adviser – training taskforce
Tel 020 7297 9050
jcarrick@LSDA.org.uk

Sylvia Gentleman
development adviser – ILT and website
Tel 020 7297 9049
sgentleman@LSDA.org.uk

David Horsburgh
development adviser – development projects and research
Tel 020 7297 9051
dhorsburgh@LSDA.org.uk

Dominic Roberts
development adviser – communications and training
Tel 020 7297 9047
droberts@LSDA.org.uk

Peter White
development adviser – publications and student support
Tel 020 7297 9052
pwhite@LSDA.org.uk

Lorraine Wilson
development adviser – A-levels
Tel 020 7297 9047
lwilson@LSDA.org.uk

Cheryl Morgan
development adviser – Dysg, Learning and Skills Development Agency for Wales
Tel 029 2074 1819
cmorgan@LSDA.org.uk

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